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Effect of political orientation on perception of agency, competence, morality, and warmth: The French presidential election 2012

Numerous studies have sought to investigate how voters perceive politicians' personalities e.g. Caprara, Vecchione, & Schwartz, 2009; Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010). The very fact that citizens are inclined to describe the personalities of candidates may be seen as a consequence of the decline of ideologies (Benett, 2012). As a consequence, mass-public may conceptualize issues in terms of candidates more than in terms of political orientations or parties. Indeed, research on the perception of politicians indicated that people tend to prefer politicians with similar personality profiles to their own (Caprara, Vecchione, Barbaranelli, & Fraley, 2007). This framework making personalization of politicians a non-ideological process may explain why the role of voters' political orientation on the perception of the personality of politicians has received little attention for itself. Nevertheless, some cues converge to show that left- and right-wing voters may vary in their perception of the personality of politicians (e.g. Roets & Van Hiel, 2009). This study aimed to show that the big-two dimensions of personality judgments (i.e. agency/competence vs. sociability/morality) provides a useful framework to make predictions on how the political orientation of voters determines (1) qualities required for being president of the French republic and (2) the judgment of real candidates of the French presidential election 2012.

The two basic dimensions of social judgment in politics

There is growing evidence that social judgment maps onto two fundamental dimensions, regardless of whether targets are individuals, groups, or self (e.g. Abele, Cuddy, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2008; Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Beauvois & Dubois, 2009; Fiske, Cuddy,

Glick, & Xu, 2002; Peeters, 1992). These two dimensions of judgment are often referred to as Competence and Warmth (Fiske et al., 2002) or as Agency and Communion (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007). Agency or Competence pertains to the capacity pursuing one's goals; this dimension is considered self-profitable (Peeters, 1992), and is linked to individualism (Dubois & Beauvois, 2005). Communion or warmth pertains to forming and maintaining a certain quality of social relations and is frequently conceptualized as "other profitable," meaning that consequences of being warm are more relevant for people surrounding the trait processor than for the trait processor himself (Peeters, 1992; Wentura, Rothermund, & Bak, 2000; Wojciszke, Baryła, Parzuchowski, Szymków-Sudziarska, & Abele, 2011).

Despite the validity and usefulness of this bi-dimensional view of social judgment, recent work has suggested that the two fundamental dimensions could be further broken down into various subcomponents. In this perspective, an important breaking-point with the classic view is that agency and competence are not considered as interchangeable concepts but rather as two independent components associated with specific features. This starting point gave rise to conduct research designed to show the relative contribution of agency and competence in predicting social status (Carrier, Louvet, Chauvin, & Rohmer, 2014; Dubois, 2010). Precisely, agency refers to the motive to promote the self (e.g. ambitious, independent, and self-confident), and competence refers to the ability in the achievement of tasks (e.g. competent, intelligent, and capable). Through factor analyses, these authors highlighted that agency and competence operate as distinct dimensions in social judgment and that high status targets are evaluated more favorably on agency than low-status targets, whereas there was no difference between the two targets for competence. In the same vein, even if communion and warmth are defined and operationalized in a consistent manner (Abele et al., 2008), empirical work has shown that Communion/Warmth encompasses two specific subcomponents: sociability reflects interest in others (e.g. warm, likeable, friendly), and morality refers to standards of

human virtue and correctness that direct social behaviors (e.g. sincere, honest, trustworthy). It has been shown that sociability and morality emerged as distinct concepts in evaluations of behaviors, and that people are more concerned in gathering information about morality than sociability to form an impression about targets (Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007; Brambilla, Rusconi, Sacchi, & Cherubini, 2011).

Social judgments were also analyzed through the social value theory held by Beauvois and Dubois (2009). This approach considers that the two fundamental dimensions serve to communicate what we can do with individuals. Here, personality traits are considered as evaluative labels communicating an evaluative knowledge of people. Precisely, people may use traits to communicate the behaviors that they envisage towards a target, and not simply to describe the target itself (Mignon & Mollaret, 2002, 2012). For example, people may consider a person as being “honest” to communicate that he or she is “a person you can trust” (evaluative knowledge). In this theoretical framework, the two fundamental dimensions are labeled “Social Desirability” and “Social Utility”. Social desirability refers to the capacity of an individual to gain social approval of others, that is, to provoke positive (or negative) reactions. Social utility refers to the capacity of an individual to satisfy (or not) the functional requirements of a given organization and therefore the degree to which he can succeed (or not) in this organization. Thus, in this approach, morality and sociability are the subcomponents of the social desirability dimension and competence and agency are the subcomponents the social utility dimension (Dubois & Beauvois, 2012). In line with this theoretical approach, this contribution aims to show that political judgments can be considered as a particular case of a social value judgment in a highly evaluative context: the presidential election.

It seems that competence and morality are the two prevalent dimensions guiding the perception of politicians. The role of competence in determining voters’ choice of candidates

is obvious (Kinder & Sears, 1985; Page, 1978). Competence of candidates is quickly inferred from nonverbal information and the most competent-looking political candidates are more likely than others to produce an overall positive impression (Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Poutvaara, Jordahl, & Berggren, 2009). The role of morality in determining voting behavior has been shown by Wojciszke and Klusek (1996), who found that honesty and integrity strongly determine the attitude of voters towards politicians. Morality probably plays a more important role than sociability on the perception of politicians. Nevertheless, considering the political orientation of voters may introduce another look on the perception of politicians' personalities.

Personality judgments of politicians and political orientations

Some cues are available to predict how political orientation may influence the perception of politicians on competence, agency, morality, and sociability.

Competence. Previous findings showed that the perception of competence drives voting intention and suggested, quite evidently, that voters of any ideological orientation are reluctant to elect incompetent candidates (e.g. Cislak & Wojcizke, 2006). More direct support for this is provided by Roets and Van Hiel (2009). Adopting the five factor approach to personality assessment (McCrae & Costa, 2006), these authors investigated the perception of the politician's ideal personality among voters of different political orientations and showed that conscientiousness – the closest dimension to competence – was the most important dimension in determining the ideal politician for all voters. Competence, defined as a cognitive ability to fulfill intentions or goals (Peeters & Czapinski, 1990), is certainly a consensual and non-ideological dimension on which politicians are perceived.

Agency. As Dubois (2010) showed, agency traits (dominant, ambitious, at ease with competition) are the most socially useful to succeed in competitive contexts. This author found that agentic traits, compared to competence traits, were used by subordinates to

describe agents standing higher in social hierarchies (i.e. bosses). Agentic traits refer to a social attitude that promotes inter-individual competition. Because (1) the presidential function is the highest social function of a political career and (2) the presidential election is a competition between candidates, we reasoned that agency could be a quality required for being president. Nevertheless, some cues converge to show that agency is an ideological dimension in that some voters are more inclined than others to look for agency in politicians. Findings from the social dominance orientation approach (SDO, Sidanius & Pratto, 2001) showed that High-SDO individuals are primarily motivated by climbing social hierarchies and are at ease within competitive contexts. Interestingly, items of the SDO-scale (e.g. to get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups) have a clearly agentic content. There is some evidence that the willingness to valorize the self within highly competitive contexts is congruent with political conservatism. Effectively, the link between a high SDO orientation and political conservatism is now firmly established (e.g. Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996). In another vein of research, authors have shown that people scoring high in the dominant sub-scales of the extraversion dimension were the most likely to hold a right-wing ideology (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo, 1999; Van Hiel & Mervielde, 2002). Because voters may prefer politicians with a personality profile similar to their own (Caprara, Vecchione, Barbaranelli, & Fraley, 2007), we hypothesize that right-wing voters would be much more interested by politicians' agency compared to left-wing voters.

Morality. As stated above, morality is one of the most important criteria on which politicians are judged. However, evidence suggests that morality is ideology-sensitive. Following Schwartz (1992), we propose that morality is a human value opposed to agency in many respects. Schwartz has identified ten values grounded in one or more of the three universal requirements of human existence with which they help to cope. One dimension contrasts "self-transcendence" (moral values that emphasize concern for welfare and interests of others)

and "self-enhancement" (agentic values that emphasize pursuit of one's own interests and relative success and dominance over others). Caprara, Vecchione and Schwartz (2009) have shown that self-transcendence values are linked to left-wing ideology and self-enhancement values are linked to right-wing ideology. Moreover, these authors confirmed that self-transcendence was regarded as most important by people adhering to left-wing ideology (Caprara et al., 1999; Caprara, Schwartz, Vecchione, & Barbaranelli, 2008; Caprara et al., 2007). Because agentic traits refer to self-enhancement values and morality to self-transcendence ones, we hypothesize that left-wing voters should be more interested in the morality of presidential candidates than right-wing voters.

Sociability. By comparison to morality, sociability appears as a negligible criterion in the making of political decisions. Nevertheless, the study conducted by Roets and Van Hiel (2009) supports that left-wing voters identified the ideal politician to be higher in agreeableness than right-wing voters. Although of globally little importance, left-wing voters should therefore be more inclined to evaluate one's warmth of character in comparison with right-wing voters.

Objectives and hypothesis

The first objective of the present study was to examine how judgments of competence, agency, morality, and sociability are qualities required to exercise the function of president and how these requirements could be sensitive to voters' political orientations. By focusing on the two basic dimensions of social judgment, we anticipated that social utility would be seen as more important a quality than social desirability. More precisely, we expected that competence would be a fundamental criterion for both left- and right-wing voters, agency should be more important for right-wing voters, and morality and sociability would be more important for left-wing voters.

The second objective was directly related to the latest presidential election in France. We aimed to explore the effect of political orientation on the differentiation between the five main candidates of the French presidential election (the five candidates above 10% of voting intentions according to opinion polls). From a psychosocial point of view, differentiating individuals on dimension is an indicator of the intensity of social judgments (see Mignon & Mollaret, 2002, 2012). The more a series of individuals are rated as different from each other, the more a social judgment is effective. Conversely, a very tenuous differentiation indicates that participants are reluctant to judge individuals. Thus, the strength of the differentiation of candidates by voters provides an indication of the relevance of that dimension for judgment of politicians. We explored the extent to which the five main candidates were differentiated on each subdimension as a function of voter's political orientation.

The third objective was to analyze the extent to which voters made partisan ratings. We thus decided to take into account how ideological orientations of candidates interact with those of voters. If participants were motivated to make partisan ratings, they should judge more positively candidates with an ideological orientation similar to their own and deny positive traits to other candidates. We explored whether this potential partisanship bias occurs for each dimension.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited online through the website LimeSurveyTM¹. 674 participants provided responses to all the questions. Participants had to locate their political orientation by moving a cursor on a 200 points continuum, going from left (-100) to right (+100). 449 participants located themselves on the left-wing (-100 to -1), 201 on the right-

¹ LimeSurvey Project Team / Carsten Schmitz (2012). / LimeSurvey: An Open Source survey tool / LimeSurvey Project Hamburg, Germany. URL <http://www.limesurvey.org>.

wing (+1 to +100) and 24 on the center (0). To create a string independent variable “political orientation” with two balance groups used in ANOVA analyses, 201 among the 449 participants located on the left-wing were selected using random procedure and retained. Thus, 402 participants (172 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 41.71$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 17.15$, age range = 18–80 years; 230 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 43.14$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 17.15$, age range = 18–84 years) were implicated implied in the analysis.

Procedure and selection of the candidates

Since 1965, the President of the French Republic is elected by direct, universal suffrage. The President is elected by an absolute majority vote through a two-round system. In 2000, the length of one term was reduced from 7 to 5 years and since 2008, a president cannot serve more than two consecutives terms. The presidential election in 2012 was held on April 22, 2012, with a second round run-off held on May 6, 2012. In order to qualify for the first round, a candidate had to collect the signatures of at least five hundred elected representatives (mayors, general councilors, regional councilors, deputies, senators, and members of the European Parliament elected in France). Ten candidates were qualified by the Constitutional Council to run for office as of March 19, 2012. The official campaign began on March 20, 2012.

Data were collected between April 4, 2012, and April 22, 2012, via the internet. The study was presented as a scientific study (and not as a sample survey) about perceptions of the five main candidates. Those candidates were selected among the 10 because they represented the five main tendencies of the political French context and each assembled above 10% of vote intention in the gallup poll. From the extreme left-wing to the extreme right-wing, theses candidates were: Jean-Luc Mélenchon (left front, radical left-wing), Francois Hollande (socialist party, left-wing), François Bayrou (democratic movement, center right-wing),

Nicolas Sarkozy who was president from 2007 to 2012 (Union for a Popular Movement, right-wing), and Marine Le Pen (National Front, extreme right-wing).

Participants were asked to report their political orientation, the importance they placed on agency, competence, sociability, and morality as qualities required to exercise the function of president, and their judgment of the five candidates on those subdimensions. They also provided demographic information such as age and sex².

Measures

Political orientation. Participants reported their political orientation in response to the question: “Where do you locate your political orientation?” by moving a cursor on a line. It was said that the extreme left part of the line corresponds to the most left-wing orientation and the extreme right of the line corresponds to the most right-wing orientation. The location of the cursor was directly encoded by a number ranging from -100 (the most left-wing location) to +100 (the most right-wing location). This measure was used to facilitate the communication of participants’ political orientation because in France, people are not inclined to reveal it, particularly when they share the extreme right-wing position. On average, participants were slightly left-wing ($M = -3.93$, $SD = 55.02$). To create the string independent variable “political orientation”, participants ranging in political orientation from -100 to -1 were coded as “left” ($M = -51.54$, $SD = 27.53$) and those ranging from +1 to +100 were coded as “right” ($M = 43.68$, $SD = 27.50$).

Judgment of qualities required to exercise the function of President. Each dimension was operationalized by two positive traits: leader and self-assured for agency, competent and intelligent for competence, sincere and honest for morality, friendly and sociable for sociability. These traits were selected from previous research on social judgment (e.g. Abele & Wojcizke, 2007; Brambilla et al., 2011; Dubois, 2010) and seemed to be relevant to the

² Note that participants were asked to answer to other questions (e.g. political orientation estimation of each candidate) in relation with a part of this research which is not considered in this paper.

political domain. Using a scale ranging from 1 (not required at all) to 7 (completely necessary), participants rated the extent to which they think that each trait is required to exercise the function of president.

Perception of the five candidates and differentiation among candidates. Participants judged each candidate on 8 bipolar ratings composed by the positive traits used for the evaluation of the qualities and their antonyms (for agency: follower/ leader and hesitating/self-assured; for competence: incompetent/competent and unintelligent/intelligent; for morality: hypocritical/sincere and honest/dishonest; for sociability: unpleasant/friendly and cold/sociable). Participants rated the extent to which each item applied to each candidate on a 7-point scale ranging from -3 (very trait A) through 0 (in between the two traits) to +3 (very trait B). For each candidate, we calculated the mean score for the two items of each dimension. These scores were used to measure the partisan ratings. To assess differentiation among the five candidates, we computed the standard deviation between the scores that a participant assigned to each candidate on a dimension³. A high score indicates that the five candidates were judged very differently on a dimension, whereas a low score indicates that candidates were judged similarly (see Mignon & Mollaret, 2002; 2012).

Results

Note that we considered as non significant all effects associated with a $p > .05$ because the associated η^2 was systematically $< .01$, which corresponds with a very weak effect size. All decomposition of significant interactions was corrected with the Bonferroni procedure. The sex of participants was initially introduced into ANOVAs, and no significant interaction

³ The standard deviation is calculated as following for each participant : $SD = \sqrt{\sum \frac{(x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n-1}}$ were x_i is the score assigned by a participant to a candidate i on a subdimension, and \bar{x} is the mean of the x_i and n is the number of candidate.

effect was observed with this variable; thus, the sex of participants is not taken into account in the ANOVA presented in the results section.

Judgment of qualities required to exercise the function of President

Principal factors extraction with varimax rotation⁴ was performed on the eight items used to assess qualities required to exercise the function of president. Principal components extraction was used prior to principal factors extraction to verify how items correctly loaded on two different components, as provided in the theoretical model. The two components extracted were consistent with the literature and explained a total of 52.63 % of the variance: sincere (.86), honest (.83), sociable (.54), and friendly (.42) loaded on the first component (i.e. social desirability); leader (.76), self-assured (.76), intelligent (.63), and competent (.58) loaded on the second one (i.e. social utility). Orthogonal rotation was retained in this first step because of conceptual model and ease of description. Moderate correlations (-.24) were revealed when oblique rotation was requested. However, because these correlations were under .30, orthogonal rotation was deemed adequate in this preliminary step (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). In a second step, we subjected these eight items to a principal factors extraction with oblique rotation (PCA), in order to empirically investigate whether the subcomponents of the two principal components can appear. This analysis revealed four factors: intelligent (.94) and competent (.76) loaded on the first factor (i.e. competence), sincere (-.89) and honest (-.89) on the second one (i.e. morality), friendly (.84) and sociable (.84) on the third factor (i.e. sociability), leader (.93) and self-assured (.69) on the fourth (i.e. agency). Expected correlations appeared between the two factors “competence” and “agency” (.36) and between the two factors “morality and “sociability” (.28). Following these preliminary steps, it became possible to create average scores and to submit these data to a 2 (political orientation: right-

⁴ The eigenvalues are ≥ 1 .

wing vs. left-wing) x 2 (dimension: social desirability vs. social utility) factorial ANOVA with dimension as the within-participants factor. The dependent variable was the mean of score within each component that is averaged scores between sociability and morality for social desirability (SD) and averaged scores between agency and competence for social utility (SU). The main effect of political orientation was not significant, $F(1,400) = 2.25, p = .14$. As expected, the main effect of component was significant, indicating that social utility ($M = 4.61, SD = 0.45$) was perceived as a more important quality required to exercise the function of President than social desirability ($M = 4.01, SD = 0.63; F(1,400) = 283.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = .41$). The political orientation x dimension interaction was also significant, $F(1,400) = 36.31, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$. The pairwise comparisons confirmed the main effect of component since SU was perceived both for left-wing voters and right-wing voters as a more important quality required to exercise the function of President than SD (for left-wing voters, $M_{SU} = 4.55, SD_{SU} = 0.43, M_{SD} = 4.21, SD_{SD} = 0.54; F(1,400) = 58.34, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$; for right-wing voters, $M_{SU} = 4.67, SD_{SU} = 0.47, M_{SD} = 3.96, SD_{SD} = 0.69; F(1,400) = 261.11, p < .001, \eta^2 = .39$). More interesting and as expected, the effect of political orientation was different on SD and SU. Precisely, left-wing voters allowed more importance to SD than right wing voters ($F(1,400) = 16.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$) whereas left-wing voters allowed less importance to SU than right-wing voters ($F(1,400) = 7.04, p = .008, \eta^2 = .02$). Means and standard deviation are presented in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 around here

To further explore these results, we conducted two separate ANOVAs analyzing the effect of political orientation within factors in a straight way. The dependant variable was the mean score between the two traits illustrating a subdimension (i.e. factor). First, we conducted a 2 (political orientation: right-wing vs. left-wing) x 2 (social desirability: morality vs. sociability) factorial ANOVA with social desirability as the within-participants factor on the

judgment of required qualities to exercise the function of President. Morality ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.75$) was judged as a more important required quality compared to sociability ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.79$), $F(1,400) = 226.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .39$. The political orientation x social desirability interaction was not significant ($F < 1$, ns) (see Figure 2). The pairwise comparisons revealed that the two main effects were significant; that is to say that left-wing voters ($M_{morality} = 4.59$, $SD_{morality} = 0.59$; $M_{sociability} = 3.84$, $SD_{sociability} = 0.75$) allowed more importance to morality and to sociability than right-wing voters ($M_{morality} = 4.32$, $SD_{morality} = 0.86$ $M_{sociability} = 3.61$, $SD_{sociability} = 0.82$) did (effect of political orientation: $F_{morality}(1,400) = 13.53$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .033$; $F_{sociability}(1,400) = 8.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .022$) and that both voters allowed more importance to morality than to sociability (effect of social desirability: $F_{left-wing}(1,400) = 140.02$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .26$; $F_{right-wing}(1,400) = 126.37$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$). Means and standard deviation are presented in Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2 around here

In the same way, we conducted a 2 (political orientation: right-wing vs. left-wing) x 2 (social utility: agency vs. competence) factorial ANOVA with social utility as the within-participants variable on the judgment of the required qualities to exercise the function of President. As expected, participants judged that competence ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 0.48$) is a more required quality than agency ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.59$; $F(1,400) = 119.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .23$). Importantly, the expected political orientation x social utility interaction was significant, $F(1,400) = 25.6$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$. The decomposition of the interaction confirmed the main effect of social utility since left- and right-wing voters judged competence (respectively, $M_{competence} = 4.77$, $SD_{competence} = 0.41$; $M_{competence} = 4.75$, $SD_{competence} = 0.54$) as a more important quality than agency (respectively, $M_{agency} = 4.32$, $SD_{agency} = 0.6$; $M_{agency} = 4.59$, $SD_{agency} = 0.56$; effect of social utility: $F_{left-wing}(1,400) = 127.64$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$; $F_{right-wing}(1,400) = 17.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$). More importantly, compared to left-wing voters, right-

wing voters considered agency as a more required quality ($F(1,400) = 20.38, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$) than left-wing voters but right- and left-wing voters did not differ on the importance allowed to competence ($F < 1, ns$). Means and standard deviation are presented in Figure 3.

Insert Figure 3 around here

In summary, these results support our hypotheses. Results showed that political orientation determined the importance one placed on qualities required for exercising the function of President of the Republic. Both left- and right-wing voters agreed that a.) social utility is a more important quality than social desirability, b.) morality is a more important quality than sociability and c.) competence is a more important quality than agency. However, compared to left-voters, right-wing voters allotted a.) more importance to agency and b.) less importance to morality and sociability.

Differentiation among candidates

Again, we conducted a 2 (political orientation: right-wing vs. left-wing) x 2 (components: social desirability vs. social utility) factorial ANOVA with dimension as the within-participants factor on differentiation among candidates. The dependent variable was average scores between sociability and morality for SD and average scores between agency and competence for SU. The political orientation effect was not significant, $F(1,400) = 1.18, p = .28, ns$. The main significant effect of component showed that candidates were more differentiated on SD ($M = 1.75, SD = 0.62$) than on SU ($M = 1.36, SD = 0.56$), $F(1,400) = 196.25, p < .001, \eta^2 = .33$. The political orientation x component interaction was significant, $F(1,400) = 128.90, p < .001, \eta^2 = .24$. Pairwise comparisons revealed that for left-wing voters, differentiation is higher on SD ($M = 1.88, SD = 0.55$) than on SU ($M = 1.17, SD = 0.51$; $F(1,400) = 321.62, p < .001, \eta^2 = .45$) but this effect is not significant for right-wing ($M_{SD} = 1.62, SD_{SD} = 0.66$; $M_{SU} = 1.54, SD_{SU} = 0.56$; $F(1,400) = 3.53, p = .06, \eta^2 = .009$). Moreover,

the effect of political orientation was significant for both dimensions. Precisely, as shown in Figure 4, candidates were more differentiated on SD by left-wing voters than by right-wing voters, $F(1,400) = 18.21, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$, whereas they were less differentiated on SU by left-wing voters than by right-voters, $F(1,400) = 47.76, p < .001, \eta^2 = .11$.

Insert Figure 4 around here

In order to analyze in a straight way the effect of political orientation within each component, we conducted two separate ANOVAs. The 2 (political orientation: right-wing vs. left-wing) x 2 (social desirability: morality vs. sociability) ANOVA with social desirability as the within factor revealed that neither the effect of social desirability ($M_{\text{morality}} = 1.77, SD_{\text{morality}} = .70; M_{\text{sociability}} = 1.72, SD_{\text{sociability}} = .70, F(1,400) = 2.95, p = .087, \eta^2 = .007$) nor the interaction effect was significant, $F(1,400) = .11, p = .71$). The pairwise comparisons confirmed the two main effects previously described. The simple effects of social desirability were not significant in the left-wing condition ($M_{\text{morality}} = 1.91, SD_{\text{morality}} = 0.61; M_{\text{sociability}} = 1.84, SD_{\text{sociability}} = 0.64; F_{\text{left-wing}}(1,400) = 2.10, p = .15, ns$), nor in the right-wing condition ($M_{\text{morality}} = 1.64, SD_{\text{morality}} = 0.75; M_{\text{sociability}} = 1.59, SD_{\text{sociability}} = 0.73; F_{\text{right-wing}} < 1, ns$). The simple effects of political orientation were significant in morality and sociability conditions. Precisely, candidates were more differentiated on morality and on sociability by left-wing candidates than by right-wing candidates (respectively, $F_{\text{morality}}(1,400) = 15.68, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04; F_{\text{sociability}}(1,400) = 13.01, p < .001, \eta^2 = .03$). Means and standard deviation are presented in Figure 5.

Insert Figure 5 around here

The 2 (political orientation: right-wing vs. left-wing) x 2 (social utility: agency vs. competence) factorial ANOVA with social utility as the within factor revealed that the effect of social utility was not significant, $F(1,400) = 1.61, p = .21$. The political orientation x social utility interaction was significant, $F(1,400) = 20.72, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$. Candidates were more

differentiated on agency ($M = 1.61, SD = .69$) than on competence ($M = 1.48, SD = .65$) by right-wing voters whereas the opposite pattern was observed for left-wing voters ($M_{\text{agency}} = 1.06, SD_{\text{agency}} = .61; M_{\text{competence}} = 1.29, SD_{\text{competence}} = .69$; respectively $F(1,400) = 5.39, p = .021, \eta^2 = .01$ and $F(1,400) = 16.74, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$). Moreover, differentiation on competence was higher for right-wing voters than for left-wing voters, as was differentiation on agency (respectively $F(1,400) = 8.09, p = .005, \eta^2 = .02$; $F(1,400) = 70.57, p < .001, \eta^2 = .15$). Means and standard deviations are presented in Figure 6.

Insert Figure 6 around here

In summary, candidates were more differentiated on social desirability than on social utility by both left- and right-wing voters of voters. However, social desirability is more used to differentiate candidates by left-wing voters than by right-wing voters whereas social utility is more used by right-wing voters than by left-wing voters. For both voters, there were more differences between candidates on sociability than on morality. Social utility was more used by right-wing voters to differentiate candidates than by left-wing voters. However, agency was more used by right-wing voters than competence to differentiate candidates, whereas competence was more used by left-wing voters than agency.

Partisan ratings

To analyze partisan ratings, we conducted 4 separate ANOVAs differentiated by the outcome measure: mean on agency, mean on competence, mean on morality, and mean on sociability. Each ANOVA followed a 2 (political orientation) x 5 (candidates: Mélenchon, Hollande, Bayrou, Sarkozy, Le Pen) design with candidates as the within factor. The expected interaction between the political orientations of voters and the political orientations of candidates (partisan ratings) was significant on the four subdimensions ($F_{\text{agency}}(4,1600) = 45.32, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$; $F_{\text{competence}}(4,1600) = 125.87, p < .001, \eta^2 = .24$; $F_{\text{morality}}(4,1600) =$

166.16, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .29$; $F_{sociability}(4,1600) = 153.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .28$)⁵. It appeared that for competence, morality, and sociability, the judgments were conformed to partisanship judgments: As illustrated in Figures 7, 8, and 9, left-wing candidates (Mélénchon and Hollande) were judged as more competent, moral and sociable by left-wing voters than by right-wing voters (respectively, for Mélénchon, $F_{competence}(1,400) = 173.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .30$; $F_{morality}(1,400) = 161.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .29$; $F_{sociability}(1,400) = 143.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .27$; for Hollande, $F_{competence}(1,400) = 186.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .32$; $F_{morality}(1,400) = 187.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .32$; $F_{sociability}(1,400) = 97.64$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .20$). The reverse was observed for the right-wing candidates (Sarkozy and Le Pen): they were judged more competent, moral, and sociable by right-wing voters than by left-wing voters (respectively, for Sarkozy, $F_{competence}(1,400) = 71.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$; $F_{morality}(1,400) = 150.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .27$; $F_{sociability}(1,400) = 181.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .31$; for Le Pen, $F_{competence}(1,400) = 30.13$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$; $F_{morality}(1,400) = 90.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$; $F_{sociability}(1,400) = 107.77$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$). Left- and right-wing voters did not differ in their judgment of the central candidate (Bayrou) for competence, morality and sociability (all $F < 1$, ns). For judgment of agency, another pattern of results was obtained (Figure 10): the partisanship judgment was only seen for the two left-wing candidates (Hollande, $F_{agency}(1,400) = 183.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .32$ and Mélénchon, $F_{agency}(1,400) = 46.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$); the right-wing candidates (Sarkozy and Le Pen) were seen as being strongly agentic by both kind of voters (respectively, for

⁵ The two main effects are significant but they are not central to our purpose. In fact, effect of political orientation only indicates if right- and left-wing voters judged more or less positively all the candidates on a subdimension and the effect of candidates only indicates if candidates were judged differently from each other on a subdimension, and this information is better captured by the dependent variable “differentiation among candidates”. However, we do want to bring the reader’s attention to the results of the two main effects. Results showed significant effects of political orientation on agency and on competence (respectively, $F_{agency}(1,400) = 79.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .17$; $F_{competence}(1,400) = 13.29$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$), but not on sociability or morality (respectively, $F_{sociability}(1,400) = 79.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .17$; $F_{morality}(1,400) = 13.29$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$). The effect of candidates was significant in each case ($F_{agency}(4,1600) = 282.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .41$; $F_{competence}(4,1600) = 31.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$; $F_{morality}(4,1600) = 78.77$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .165$; $F_{sociability}(4,1600) = 128.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$).

Sarkozy, $F_{agency} < 1$, *ns*, for Le Pen, $F_{agency} (1,400) = 2.79$, $p = .10$, *ns*). Left-wing voters judged the central candidate (Bayrou) more agentic compared to right-wing voters, $F_{agency} (1,400) = 15.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$.

Insert Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10 around here

Discussion

In line with the social value approach, the aim of the present research was to examine how judgments of (i.e. competence and agency), and social desirability (i.e. morality and sociability) mitigate a voter's perception of a presidential candidate's qualification for election and how these requirements could be sensitive to voters' political orientations. This study was conducted in the specific context of the French presidential election of 2012. Our theoretical objective was to show that voters' ideology (operationalized by political orientation) would determine their personality judgments of candidates. First, we showed that left and right-wing voters hold different views about the personality traits needed to be a president. Compared to right-wing voters, left-wing voters allowed more importance to socially desirable traits and less importance to socially useful traits. Moreover, taking into account the subdimensions, even though both categories of voters allowed more importance to competence than to agency, right-wing voters considered agency as a more important quality than left-wing voters. Second, our results showed that political orientation influenced the personality judgments of real candidates. Right-wing voters differentiated candidates less on social desirability and more on social utility compared to left-wing voters. Moreover, unlike right-wing voters, left-wing voters used social desirability more than social utility to differentiate candidates. Importantly, left-wing voters have differentiated candidates more on competence than agency and the reverse pattern was found for right-wing voters. Third, voters assigned more morality, sociability and competence to candidates who shared a similar ideological orientation. In contrast, results revealed no partisan ratings on agency.

Most of our results confirm our hypotheses on the link between the descriptions of politicians and political orientations of voters. However, the perception of candidates on agency was surprising. Both left- and right-wing voters have characterized Mélenchon (radical left wing), Sarkozy (right wing) and Le Pen (radical right wing) as agentic candidates. Only François Hollande gave rise to clear partisan ratings (he was found moderately agentic only by left wing voters). Globally, voters are not reluctant to attribute agency to candidates defending opposite political view of their own. Importantly, results on competence follow a very different pattern. Right-wing voters denied any competence to Mélenchon whereas left-wing voters found that Sarkozy and Le Pen were not competent. One plausible explanation to this non-correspondence between agency and competence ratings (the two subcomponents of social utility) is that competence may be considered by all voters as the most necessary dimension to become president. If competence is the first criteria on which voters make their political choices, they should ascribe competence to their favourite candidate. Our methodology does not allow any clear conclusion about which of the dimensions is a prerequisite for the voting decisions. New research is necessary to further explore how voters attribute competence and agency to politicians. Moreover, it is imprudent to generalize our results to the whole political domain; the prevalent role of social utility (particularly agency) on the voters' choice could be circumscribed to the highest political functions (the presidential election is the most important election in France). It is reasonable to hypothesize that morality and sociability (social desirability) are more valorized for more local responsibilities (mayor of a small town for example). Effectively, behaving as a leader (agency) may only be adaptive for reaching the top of social hierarchies, which is not the goal of all politicians.

In summary, our results indicate the importance of distinguishing between different subdimensions of traits within social utility and social desirability. However, because our research was conducted with only two traits per subdimension, further work is necessary

before drawing firm conclusions. Precisely, our experiment was conducted with only two traits in order to prevent the excessive fatigue of the participants who were involved in a series of judgments. The distinction between different subdimensions within the big-two should be confirmed by the means of more “simple” studies in which participants would be instructed to judge few well-known head of states with many traits. Although political orientation is a recurrent variable to predict political choices, it is probably not sufficient to highlight evaluations of politicians. In future work, we will seek to indicate a potential link verify that the adhesion to more explicit ideological beliefs (i.e. the justification of the actual political system) could be a strong determinant of the perception of politicians. In particular, the beliefs that the inegalitarian political system is fair and should be maintained (Kay & Jost, 2003) could orient voters to look for the most agentic political leaders. In this vein, it is also fundamental to study perception of politicians with respect to voters' own social status. Effectively, motivation for high status voters to maintain their social position relative to others may also play a role in their perception of politicians.

Our results are compatible with the argument of Caprara et al. (2002), which suggests that the perception of the personality of politicians is organized on only two factors. Although the big-two factors (communion/morality and competence/agency) can be seen as two meta-traits corresponding to genuine psychological tendencies (Wiggins & Trapnell, 1996; Vecchione, Alessandri, Baranelli & Caprara, 2011), our results are more compatible with an evaluative view of the dimensions expressing a variety of beliefs or values. Voters may use personality traits to express their ideological beliefs. In that sense, the fact that people are interested in politicians' personalities is more than a simple personalization of political issues. We propose that voters may use traits as ideological criteria on which they judge candidates in order to make their voting decision. Thus, the evaluative view of personality description held by social psychologists (e.g. Dubois & Beauvois, 2011) has potential to conceptualize the link

between personality judgments and ideological beliefs. Importantly, given that the big-two approach has never proved its efficiency for studying a variety of social and societal issues like the rationalization of gender stereotypes (Fiske et al., 2002) or the justification of inequality of resources (Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007, 2010), we believe this model is better adapted to study political issues than the traditional five factor model. The five factor model would be more effective if voters were motivated to make accurate personality judgments of politicians, but this is most likely not the case.

Finally, our findings confirm the necessity legitimacy to distinguish dissociate different facets of the big-two. Only few studies envisage agency and competence as distinct facets of the second fundamental dimension (for two exceptions, see Dubois, 2010; Carrier et al., 2014). This study further demonstrates that competence and agency correspond to two very different facets of social utility. Competence (i.e. the ability to master a task) is valorized by people of any ideological orientation, which most certainly is not the case of agency (i.e. the willingness to perform better than others). Beyond political psychology, our results provide a strong argument for the differentiation between agentic and competence traits.

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